

DDA Registry
File

DDA 76-4757

23 September 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Administration

FROM : [REDACTED]
Assistant for Information, DDA

SUBJECT : Report of the Working Group on
Information Systems

1. Attached is the report of the Working Group on Information Systems Producing Classified Data. As you can see, the Group examined the feasibility of a system to separate classified and unclassified data in DDA information systems to thereby reduce the number of seemingly overclassified administrative documents produced by those systems. The conclusion could have been predicted, but I think it's good that we focused some attention on this area of the overclassification problem so that we don't appear to be blindly going our own way in apparent contradiction to the existing classification instructions.

2. [REDACTED] OF, participated in the group meetings and prepared this final paper. They did a fine job and are to be commended.

Attachment: a/s

cc: Office of Personnel
Office of Data Processing
Office of Security
Office of Finance

O-AT/DDA [REDACTED] (23 September 1976)
Distribution:

- Original - Addressee
- 1 - OP w/att.
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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
INFORMATION SYSTEMS PRODUCING CLASSIFIED DATA

BACKGROUND

CIA produces great volumes of classified information, the majority of which is properly classified but some of which is technically overclassified by the definitions of Executive Order 11652. The Working Group was organized to look at the classification problem as it relates to computer-assisted information systems, including input documents, information in the data base, output reports and secondary documents resulting from computer printouts.

According to E.O. 11652, information should be classified in the interests of national defense or foreign relations (collectively called national security). The basic test for assigning classification to a document is whether the release of that document would cause a degree of damage to national security. Additionally, documents are classified to protect intelligence sources and methods -- one area of which involves relationships with employees.

With widespread criticism of questionable classification, it was felt the DDA should review classification practices to determine if changes in DDA personnel-oriented computer systems could minimize overclassification. The Group looked specifically at the Offices of Finance, Personnel and Security computer applications with the Office of Data Processing representing other offices' systems and the technology required to modify existing applications.

PROBLEM

Some administrative documents are overclassified when evaluated strictly against the classification criteria established by E.O. 11652 and its implementing instructions. This is particularly apparent in ADP systems where individual data items of varying classifications are aggregated into computerized data bases. Thus, the entire data base is classified at the same or next higher level than the highest single data item. In terms of input, individual documents

may require varying classifications, but because of ultimate information aggregation, such documents are classified initially at the level of the data base. Output documents create the other side of the problem. In some cases, individual reports from a classified aggregate are classified to protect the aggregate and because classification criteria have not been established and defined in reporting programs. Secondary reports or documents produced manually from computer listings are classified at the same level as the computer listing because presently there is no way to separate classified from unclassified portions of the data in the listings.

For example, a personnel data base contains data on individuals who are under various cover restrictions and their documentation requires different levels of classification. But the data base will be classified at the highest level to protect them all. Output on a single individual will be classified at the level of the aggregate data base although the individual may be an overt employee whose data requires no classification.

SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES:

A. An input document would reflect the correct classification of its individual information. This classification would be coded into the computer data base so that the computer could generate reports with an appropriate overall classification by comparing classification codes for all persons or items in the report, i.e., if everyone listed is coded as unclassified, the report would be unclassified. Or, if one name appeared with a classified code, the total report would be classified. In addition, since the classification codes would be indicated on computer printouts, clerks preparing secondary documents would be able to check the listing and classify their documents appropriately.

Such coding is technically possible but not practical. The modification of all existing programs and data bases, the resultant systems degradations and the continuing maintenance costs for this coding scheme would be staggering. More importantly, the problem of controlling and coordinating code changes would create a situation susceptible to compromise if newly classified information continued to appear as unclassified until new computer listings were produced. This time lag and the possibility of an obsolete report being used to control information are unacceptable risks in the protection of Agency personnel. Since most Agency information is

classified to protect sources and methods and not specifically national defense, it is questionable whether any measurable decrease in classification would result from implementation of a coding scheme.

B. We can accept the present situation as a practical way to adequately protect CIA information. Without specific classification guidelines or a separate system to protect intelligence sources and methods, we must take a conservative approach to classification. This means that we recognize the probability that a small percentage of administrative documents will be overclassified by some interpretations of the Executive Order, but properly classified in order to protect our sources and methods.

SUMMARY

At this time with existing systems and computer programs, there is no economically feasible way to correct the problem while, at the same time, protecting Agency intelligence information.

RECOMMENDATION

The magnitude and scope of this problem are formidable and solutions simply are not possible overnight. However, every effort must be made to prevent further proliferation of the problem. As a step in this direction, we recommend:

As new computer software is developed and new systems installed, we should ensure that the problem of obtaining proper classification is thoroughly explored and that all economically feasible solutions are implemented. From the viewpoint of correcting the existing situation, personnel working with computer systems should be alert for practical methods which would correct any facet of this classification problem.

USE ONLY

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

Approved For Release 2006/04/19 : CIA-RDP86-00674R000300080025-2

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Report of the Working Group on Information Systems

FROM:

[Redacted]

Assistant for Information

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

23 September 1976

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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25 SEP 1976

27 SEP 1976

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[Handwritten initials: Z, G, 7, B]

2.00 Sorry there are no comments. I thought it was first-class. B.

FORM 3-62

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